United Nations S/PV.5832

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5832nd meeting

Friday, 8 February 2008, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Arias	(Panama)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Verbeke
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Costa Rica	Mr. Weisleder
	Croatia	Mrs. Mladineo
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad
	Viet Nam	Mr. Hoang Chi Trung

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

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08-23190 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Expression of farewell to Mrs. Mirjana Mladineo, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We understand that this is the last occasion on which Ambassador Mirjana Mladineo, Permanent Representative of Croatia, will participate in the meetings of the Council. Ambassador Mladineo, with her distinguished career in the diplomatic service of her country, has represented Croatia at United Nations Headquarters since 2005. I wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the members of the Council and on my own account, to express to our colleague and friend every success in her future endeavours.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Eliasson to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Guéhenno to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Her Excellency Mrs. Lila H. Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer of the African Union.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur, and Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

I now give the floor to Mr. Eliasson.

Mr. Eliasson: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for inviting me to make this briefing to the Security Council.

As members are aware, it has been over one year since my African Union (AU) counterpart, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, and I embarked on our work to re-energize the political process for Darfur. In that pursuit, we have received active, persistent and committed support from the Secretary-General and from the AU Chairperson. We have met and consulted widely with the parties, with civil society, with regional partners, with the international community and, of course, with the Security Council. We convened a productive meeting with the movements last August in Arusha. We launched the first phase of the peace talks through the opening session in Sirte on 27 October.

Since then, we have been working intensely with the parties in preparation for substantive talks. Some progress has been made in bringing the parties closer to the negotiating table. But we have also been faced with a deteriorating security situation, as well as other constraints largely beyond our control.

When I briefed the Council in November, I highlighted the key role of the political process in bringing about normalization and peace in Darfur. At the same time, I stressed that progress will be impossible without the creation of an environment conducive to substantive negotiations.

Over the past few months, the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur and in the region has dramatically deteriorated, most recently through events related to Chad. During this time, the parties have not

been able to finalize their preparations for substantive talks or engage in confidence-building measures to improve prospects for negotiations. Those problems have been compounded by the slow deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), undermining the chances to demonstrate to the people of Darfur that the international community is bringing security to them.

As Council members are aware, for some time there have been serious clashes between the Government of Sudan and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)-Khalil Ibrahim forces in West Darfur. Earlier this week, Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) Unity movement units clashed with forces of the Government of Sudan in North Darfur, and there have been reports of continued aerial bombardments. In recent months, there have also been several cross-border incursions between Chad and Darfur, as we all know. After the attacks on N'Djamena by rebel groups last weekend, the situation is now calmer, but it remains fluid and fragile. All these developments, and the subsequent continued tensions between Chad and Sudan, have detrimental consequences for the Darfur political process.

It should be added that humanitarian actors remain deeply concerned about the safety of their staff and about their ability to provide assistance to the civilian population. This comes at a time when malnutrition continues to rise and crop failures are occurring or foreseen in parts of Darfur. Coupled with the slow deployment of UNAMID, not seeing positive change on the ground will continue to frustrate a population with rising expectations regarding security, protection and early recovery programmes. That is particularly the case not only in the camps for internally displaced persons, but also in rural communities where the population is in dire need of support. I saw that with my own eyes during visits in December and January.

The launching of the peace process in Sirte in October served as a catalyst for accelerating the movements' preparations for the talks. Mr. Salim and I were encouraged by recent steps forward by the movements to reorganize and unite. In Juba, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) was able to successfully assist a number of them in coming together during the autumn. Further consultations have also continued within and between them on the ground in Darfur.

As a result, as of now, the movements have coalesced around five groupings: SLA-Unity, the United Resistance Front (URF), SLA-Abdul Shafi, SLA-Abdul Wahid and JEM-Khalil Ibrahim. This is an improvement compared to the situation in which we found ourselves last year at this time, when many movements were fragmenting, unconvinced that a political solution was the best way forward.

We must, however, be aware that the movements are continuously repositioning themselves. Unification and coordination efforts continue but remain fraught with difficulties, not least related to unresolved leadership issues. The movements have still to prepare for discussions on substantive matters for the talks. Thus, prospects for quick agreements on common positions and a negotiation team appear dim.

To facilitate the movements' preparations for the negotiations, the idea has been proposed of hosting what we call an Arusha-style preparatory meeting with the movements, in close coordination with our regional partners, in order for them to coordinate their positions. Such a meeting could be followed by workshops to finalize preparations for the talks.

However, holding such a meeting would not meet its objective without the presence of what I would call a critical mass of movement representatives. To determine the movements' readiness, Mr. Salim, I and our team have been out in the field and have consulted extensively with the leaders of the movements during December and January through missions to Darfur, Juba and locations outside the Sudan.

Out of the five main groupings, two groups — the SLA-Unity and the URF — have expressed their willingness to join the political process and participate in a preparatory meeting, in workshops and, of course, in the substantive talks. They should be commended for their commitment to the search for a political solution. Furthermore, both groups continue to be engaged in coordination discussions with each other and with other movements. A third grouping, SLA-Abdul Shafi, now based in Juba, has requested to go to Darfur to consult with its constituency and has also expressed reservations on the format and venue of the talks.

SLA-Abdul Wahid and Abdul Wahid's representatives in the field have recently engaged in dialogue with the mediation and the UNAMID Force Commander, General Agwai. I personally had a lengthy

and constructive discussion with Abdul Wahid in Paris last week. However, he and his movement are still not ready to engage in negotiations until certain preconditions are met, primarily related to security for the people of Darfur.

The fifth grouping, JEM-Khalil Ibrahim, has stated that it is committed to the political process, provided that, inter alia, there be only two movements at the talks, the JEM and the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM). However, it is also clear that this movement is engaged in military activities.

Some of the movements have requested additional time to achieve unification. Mr. Salim and I have long cautioned against the more ambitious objective of full unification as a condition for talks to begin. This may take a long time. Instead, we have encouraged the movements to speed up the unfinished work of preparing common positions and a common negotiation team.

In short, Mr. Salim and I believe that the convening of a preparatory meeting during the coming weeks would be premature, due to the movements' internal preparations and efforts to reach a critical mass of participation. To this must be added the fragile security situation and the tense Chad-Sudan relationship and its effects on the region and on the political process in Darfur.

Against this background, the mediation is strengthening its efforts to assist the movements' preparations. Our team will have consultations with the movements on various substantive issues during the next few weeks. Of course, it will also engage the Government on these matters. In addition, together with UNAMID and the Darfur-Darfur dialogue, we are increasing our work to incorporate into the peace process the views and concerns of civil society, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and traditional leaders through the establishment of what we call advisory forums. These forums will serve as mechanisms for the selection of observers from civil society for the talks and as information channels to and from the people of Darfur.

Too often in history, efforts to resolve conflicts and build peace have been limited to those who have taken up arms. In Darfur, ordinary citizens and the IDPs have carried the burden and paid a huge price for the conflict. It is essential that we establish effective communications with the people of Darfur about expectations, progress and, in due time, results of the talks. Many of them will be responsible for the implementation of a future agreement, and they will hold the parties accountable for their commitments.

After one year of engagement with the parties, I would like to attempt to give the Council a realistic assessment of where we find ourselves in the search for peace in Darfur. The parties have no doubt made progress in their preparations. But they are still, to a great degree, not ready to engage in substantive talks. As stated, the movements still lack consolidated positions and have not yet formed a joint team. We commend the governing parties, the National Congress Party (NCP) and the SPLM, for resolving their differences and resuming cooperation within the Government of National Unity of the Sudan. But there is still need for a common strategy incorporating the positions of the NCP, SPLM and Minni Minawi — a signatory of the Darfur Peace Agreement, as members know — on how to resolve the crisis in Darfur. Much more also needs to be done by all parties to improve safety and humanitarian conditions on the ground. Of course, the Government has the primary responsibility for upholding security, justice and respect for international law.

The experience of the last months demonstrates more than ever that resolution of the Darfur crisis requires an environment conducive to peace. While the people of Darfur cannot wait forever, we will have to accept that the steps towards an eventual peace agreement will be incremental and will take longer than we had initially hoped.

While continuing our efforts on the political track, we should thus also concentrate on the issues of immediate concern to the population. The most pressing matter at the moment is security. We have been repeatedly urging the parties to exercise restraint, refrain from military activities on the ground and accept that a political solution is the only path to resolution of the conflict.

As Council members will recall, establishing a strengthened ceasefire was the third component of the Addis Ababa conclusions of November 2006, together with the peacekeeping and political tracks. An agreement on a cessation of hostilities and a credible monitoring mechanism for such an agreement are a necessary step on the path towards peace. As a demonstration of their commitment to the political

process, the parties should now unilaterally declare and respect a cessation of hostilities, as well as cooperate in the efforts to reform the existing ceasefire mechanisms. We will continue our discussions with UNAMID on how best to bring this issue forward. Jean-Marie Guéhenno and I are working closely together on this matter.

At the same time, Mr. Salim and I are re-evaluating the staffing needs for the mediation. Following a year of preparations for the talks, we believe it is necessary to have a full-time joint African Union-United Nations chief mediator in the Sudan engaging with the parties on a continuous basis and leading the daily work of the Joint Mediation Support Team (JMST). We are restructuring the mediation support team to also reflect the new realities of the joint African Union-United Nations presence in Darfur since the beginning of the year.

To conclude, allow me to reiterate that we must remain steadily engaged and build on the progress made so far with a view to initiating substantive talks. However, the deterioration of the situation on the ground in Darfur and in the region most recently now also warrants intensified efforts by the international community to reduce prevailing tensions. Without a relationship of trust and cooperation between Chad and the Sudan, peace will be elusive for the people of Darfur. The absence of such a relationship is also damaging the cohesion and cooperation among our regional partners in the search for peace.

A sense of security and calm must finally take root in Darfur through a combination of the deployment of an effective peacekeeping force and credible commitments by all parties to a cessation of hostilities. In such a way, a climate conducive to productive peace talks could be created. Mr. Salim and I are committed to facilitating that process. To that end, we will work closely with UNAMID and all concerned to ensure greater synergy between the political, peacekeeping and humanitarian components. In that endeavour, we will continue to need the support of the international community and, in particular, this Council.

Ultimately, however, we must remember that progress will be made only when the parties themselves demonstrate the necessary political will and their commitment to peace. It is now time for them to get on with the serious work of achieving peace and a life of dignity for the people of Darfur.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Eliasson. I now give the floor to Mr. Guéhenno.

Mr. Guéhenno: Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on Darfur. As the Council may be aware, I travelled to the region from 21 to 31 January in order to visit, among other missions, the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in the weeks following the transfer of authority and to hold consultations with officials from the Government of the Sudan on the outstanding issues related to the deployment of the Hybrid Operation. My visit to the region was sobering, yet extremely informative, and I would like to provide the Council with some observations from my trip. Before doing so, allow me to provide a brief update on the current security and humanitarian situation in Darfur.

The recent hostilities between the Government of the Sudan and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and its leader, Khalil Ibrahim, in West Darfur and the continued build-up of their forces in the area remains one of our principal security concerns in Darfur. As a result of that situation, the majority of the state of West Darfur remains inaccessible to humanitarian organizations. The situation has been exacerbated by the violence in Chad over the past several days. The potentially destabilizing regional implications of the crisis have been highlighted by numerous media reports of Chadian rebel movements receiving support in the Sudan, on the one hand, and Sudanese rebel movements that have acted in support of the Chadian Government, on the other. Continuing accusations by both Governments of their support for rebel movements on each side of the border increase the climate of mistrust, fuel tensions between the two countries and once again demonstrate the potential for a conflict of international dimensions in the area.

Meanwhile, other disturbing trends are emerging, including the large-scale mobilization and shifting alliances of Arab militia in South Darfur, which has coincided with an increase in direct conflict between rebel movements and pro-Government militia. In addition, the appointment of Musa Hilal to the position of Advisor to the Ministry of Federal Affairs is being viewed by many as an extremely disappointing development, particularly since the Security Council

itself has recognized his past involvement in violence in Darfur.

The ongoing violence in Darfur and the border area also poses a significant threat to civilians as the humanitarian community endeavours to provide them with the assistance they require. Continuing displacement, compounded by decreasing humanitarian access and impending crop failures in many areas of Darfur due to late rains, pests and neglect of farms, threatens to create a humanitarian situation that the international community simply does not have the capacity to address. The humanitarian situation will improve only if we see a decrease in hostilities and cooperation on behalf of the armed groups in the area.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to now share with the Council some observations from my trip to Darfur. During my visit to the three states that make up Darfur, it became clear that UNAMID is severely under-resourced for the tasks that it was mandated to perform. The number of troops and police and their enabling capabilities currently in the mission area are clearly not sufficient to provide protection for the civilian population in Darfur in the current hostile environment.

Nevertheless, UNAMID is exploring ways in which to bring about tangible improvement in the situation with the limited human and material resources at its disposal. For example, the Mission is doing its utmost to adopt a more proactive posture through increased presence, especially in internally displaced persons camps. To that end, the UNAMID Police Commissioner has dramatically increased the number of police patrols, which now take place from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and is constructing a number of police posts in those areas with a view to maintaining a 24-hour presence. The Force Commander is also exploring options for increasing the presence of forces in key areas.

It is important to stress that despite those efforts, the Mission will not be able to meet the high expectations of Darfur's civilians. That is particularly worrying since we risk losing their confidence if we are not able to meet those expectations. Experience in United Nations peacekeeping has shown that the loss of the local population's confidence can deal a severe blow to our efforts.

The Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Field Support, Ms. Lute, also visited the Mission in the days prior to my trip. Ms. Lute noted a number of significant challenges with respect to bringing UNAMID up to United Nations standards. Among the priorities in that respect is the improvement of UNAMID camps, particularly camp services, and security and force protection measures in order to avoid a repetition of the events of Haskanita. That will be essential for improving troop morale and security, in addition to the Mission's operational effectiveness.

At the time of Ms. Lute's visit, a total of 1,256 staff, or 23 per cent of the authorized UNAMID posts, had been deployed to Darfur. The challenges faced by UNAMID staff are many and range from poor living conditions to high staff turn-over due to security concerns.

(*spoke in English*)

Following my visit to Darfur, I travelled to Addis Ababa on 27 January, where African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Mr. Said Djinnit, and I met with Mr. Mutrif Siddiq, the Chairman of the Government of the Sudan's technical committee for the implementation of UNAMID. We had the opportunity to discuss a number of outstanding matters related to the deployment of the operation, including the issues of UNAMID accoutrements, force composition and the finalization of the status-of-forces agreement. The meeting was constructive, with all sides emphasizing the need to build on recent progress, especially with respect to status-of-forces agreement negotiations. Mr. Siddiq, however, noted that he would be required to further consult with his Government, and we were not able to reach any definitive conclusions on the issues that we discussed.

As the Council is aware, the Secretary-General had the opportunity to meet with President Bashir on the margins of the African Union summit in Addis Ababa some days later. There they further discussed a number of outstanding issues, on which the Secretary-General briefed the Council this Tuesday. One of the principal issues that they discussed was force composition, which, as the Secretary-General noted, resulted in some progress with regard to the deployment of key units. In that regard, the Secretary-General indicated to the President that the United Nations would prioritize the rapid deployment of Ethiopian troops to UNAMID on the understanding

that the Thai and Nepalese units would be deployed simultaneously. I should recall that the Thai and Nepalese contingents were ready to deploy on short notice, and the early addition of new contingents remains a desperate need for UNAMID.

The issue of force composition is one of the lynchpins to UNAMID's success, and we urgently require a definitive decision from the Government on the inclusion of the Thai and Nepalese units. If we are to deploy those units alongside the Ethiopian troops, we must inform Thailand and Nepal immediately so that urgent pre-deployment preparations can be finalized. Ethiopia has indicated that it would be ready to initiate the deployment of its battalion to Darfur within the month of February, and we anticipate that the deployment of the advance party of the Egyptian battalion will begin within the month of March.

In light of the continuing discussions that we have had with the Government on the issue of force composition, it is worth recalling that Security Council resolution 1769 (2007) indicates that the force should be "predominantly African in character". To have a force that is exclusively African in character is another matter. There are a number of important reasons why a broader mix of troops is necessary. To obtain the required capabilities will necessitate seeking troop and police contributors from non-African countries for certain capabilities.

If we are to reconfigure UNAMID into a robust, credible and proactive peacekeeping presence, there are a number of issues which must be confronted as a matter of the utmost priority. We are now at a critical moment in the life of the Hybrid Operation, and additional delay in resolving those issues would have a severely negative impact on the mission. As already mentioned, it is essential that we expeditiously conclude all necessary arrangements to allow for the early deployment of the Thai and Nepalese units. We have already expressed our willingness to prioritize deployment of Ethiopian and Egyptian troops with the understanding that those Asian units would deploy in a timely fashion. It is important also that UNAMID's force composition should draw upon a broad range of countries, since due consideration must be given to the geographical balance of the force in order to have an operation that is perceived as impartial by the parties.

On a more positive note, we very much welcome the progress that we have made with the Government in our consultations on the status-of-forces agreement, which we hope to sign soon. The spirit in which those negotiations have taken place should set the tone for the resolution of all outstanding issues regarding the deployment of UNAMID. In that regard, we must still resolve a number of matters, including full freedom of movement for UNAMID. As we have said previously, peacekeeping is a round-the-clock job, and the force must have the ability to patrol both on the ground and in the air at all hours. We also require the Government's cooperation in extending visas to the contractors currently providing services to UNAMID troops in Darfur until a new contractor is in place. The bidding process is under way, and we expect to finalize that issue within the shortest possible time frame.

In the meantime, UNAMID troop and police contributors must do everything possible to expedite their pre-deployment preparations and arrive at the mission with the required capabilities as swiftly as possible. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations stands ready to provide whatever additional assistance UNAMID troop and police contributors may require in that regard.

However, as the Council is aware, UNAMID still lacks critical military aviation and ground transportation assets, which must be urgently generated. We appreciate the United Kingdom's efforts in that regard; however, we still lack the majority of military helicopter units which are required, and some ground transportation units. The Council must be aware that, should offers for those critical capabilities not be forthcoming, additional troops will not be a sufficient substitute. Darfur is a vast area, and we must have the ability to quickly move troops to strategic points. The Secretariat will continue to pursue all avenues to generate those assets, and will consider all credible possibilities.

The continued hostilities in Darfur serve as a stark reminder that some parties to the conflict are still not prepared to lay down their weapons and commit to the path of dialogue. In addition to prolonging the suffering of millions of civilians in the region and complicating the peace process, continued hostilities will have very negative consequences for the deployment of UNAMID and will distract the mission from implementing its mandate. In that regard, the Council must be prepared for the eventuality that UNAMID may be forced to operate in an environment of continued hostilities, which could significantly complicate our collective

efforts to support the implementation of Security Council resolution 1769 (2007) and a future peace agreement in Darfur.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mrs. Lila Ratsifandrihamanana.

Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana (*spoke in French*): I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting on a subject that looms large among our shared concerns. I commend Mr. Jan Eliasson and Mr. Guéhenno on their exhaustive briefings, which the African Union fully endorses, being one of the pillars of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Our participation in this meeting transcends the symbolic act of being present here. We are here above all to reaffirm the African Union's firm commitment to discharging its duties and responsibilities to work alongside the United Nations for the success of the effective deployment of UNAMID and the Hybrid Operation as a whole. We are also here to reiterate our resolve to establish close cooperation with all the partners involved in that unique enterprise, aware as we are of the challenge we face. We cannot allow that unprecedented operation to fail. Today more than ever before, we must demonstrate solidarity and mutual confidence.

We are also here to recall the long and difficult road travelled, the many obstacles and the reoccurring difficulties that emerged before the decisive turning point of 31 December 2007 — the transfer of authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to UNAMID, which represented a significant milestone in the quest for peace in Darfur and the region. We take this opportunity once again to hail the personnel and troops of AMIS for their selflessness and the heroic work which they undertook in extremely difficult circumstances.

We are also here to share the decisions adopted at the latest Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union. The Assembly emphasized the relaunching of the peace negotiations on 27 October 2007 in Sirte. In that connection, the Assembly reaffirmed its support for the joint efforts of the two Special Envoys, Mr. Jan Eliasson and Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, and called upon the various parties involved to cooperate further, since the use of arms is no longer an alternative. The Sudanese Government has been strongly encouraged to continue to cooperate with the African Union and the United Nations with a view to facilitating the implementation of UNAMID's mandate.

We take this opportunity to praise and encourage the troops that make up UNAMID and to thank the troop-contributing countries and the donor countries for their generosity.

As we see it, there has been no lack of will but rather a lack of resources. Today, we would like to call upon the Council to take a close look at the problems of resources and logistics, which were referred to a moment ago by Mr. Guéhenno.

We realize, however, that a great deal has to be done before we achieve our shared objective of peace and the effective return to normalcy in Darfur, in the Sudan and throughout the region. We must be more careful, since instability in Darfur has spread throughout the region and new concerns beset us with the recent events in Chad, as well as in Kenya.

(*spoke in English*)

The UNAMID operation represents a concrete testimony of the new and emerging partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations such as the African Union in the continued quest for international peace and security. We encourage the Council to continue to strengthen the support for the efforts deployed by regional organizations on behalf of the Council, which remains the primary custodian of international peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations.

We therefore appeal to all to continue to support the process and to take all necessary measures towards addressing the outstanding gaps in the critical capabilities required to ensure the effectiveness of UNAMID. We thank the Government of the Sudan for the cooperation it has extended thus far and urge it to continue in this spirit, so as to resolve the remaining outstanding issues of land, air transportation and the freedom of movement of UNAMID. We believe this will greatly assist in facilitating the speedy and smooth deployment of various components of UNAMID.

With regard to the relation between Chad and the Sudan, the African Union continues to engage both member States constantly, with the facilitation of His Excellency Colonel Muammar Al-Qadhafi, the leader of the great Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

We believe that the success of this Hybrid Operation depends largely on the early achievement of a comprehensive political agreement. In this respect, we reaffirm the commitment of the African Union to continue to work closely with the United Nations towards the advancement of the political process. We recognize the obvious challenges involved in the process, but we are confident that the parties and stakeholders will continue to play constructive roles towards moving the peace process forward. We are encouraged by the attendance of some of the movements in the talks on Juba and their willingness to unify their positions on a common negotiating platform.

(*spoke in French*)

I cannot conclude without failing to note, once again, our sincere appreciation to both Mr. Guéhenno and Mr. Eliasson for their tireless efforts in this process. Finally, I would like to echo all of those Africans who are devoted to peace in expressing once again our thanks to and our confidence in all of the members of this Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mrs. Lila Ratsifandrihamanana for her statement. I now open the floor to members of the Council.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): The briefings we have just heard from Mr. Jan Eliasson, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations — both of whom we would like to thank earnestly — provide a glimpse of developments that are not completely pessimistic on the subject of the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Some indicators, which had been unclear until now, are becoming more visible, according to the information given to us by the Secretary-General after his talks with the highest authorities in the Sudan. The Sudanese authorities agreed to the expansion of the UNAMID contingent with the participation of some non-African countries, and the Sudanese President made a commitment to authorize the signing of a status-of-forces agreement. It is true that, according to most recent information, that agreement has not yet been signed, but let us not lose hope.

Furthermore, the improvement of the situation in Chad, while still precarious after the latest conflict, allows us to think that there is a strong possibility that the European Union-led peacekeeping force (EUFOR) and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) might be deployed in the meantime, thereby providing substantial support to the Hybrid Operation. At any rate, we wish to praise this desire for openness that has been expressed by the Khartoum Government.

Nevertheless, in spite of some encouraging signs we must remain vigilant, since the humanitarian and security situation continues to worsen, as was so rightly stated in the briefings by Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Guéhenno. Indeed, there is no need to emphasize that the civilian population, who are the primary victims of these events, are basing their hopes on a rapid and effective deployment of UNAMID.

As I had recalled during a previous meeting, my country, Burkina Faso, has already shown its readiness to take part in this operation by making available an 800-person battalion. Here my delegation would like to commend the commitment of the contributing countries, in particular those who have been so generous in providing logistical support without which, we agree, UNAMID could not become operational.

The briefings we have just heard seem to foretell — and no one has challenged this — that the situation as a whole remains dangerous. This is shown by the recent attacks of armed groups against Chad, the resurgence of tension between Chad and the Sudan, and the atrocities committed by armed rebel groups. All of those events compromise the effective deployment of UNAMID in the region. In order to achieve stability in the region, the various Sudanese parties — the Government and the armed groups — should chose dialogue as the best option for settling their political differences and with the sole goal of respecting the common interest.

In that connection, my delegation would like to welcome the efforts made by the mediators with a view to bringing together the armed movements and the holding of a conference on substantive issues that can lead to a fair, negotiated settlement of the dispute.

Forty days since the official date for the deployment of UNAMID, it has to be said that we have fallen significantly behind — not just with regard to the programme itself but, above all, as concerns the worrying and painful tragedies taking place daily on the ground. We therefore have but one wish, namely, that things at last begin to move along. To that end, we

wish much luck to Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Guéhenno, who, we know, are working tirelessly for the success of this enormous Operation, regardless of the difficulties and the current impasse. I should also like to thank Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, for her enlightening and interesting briefing regarding the situation on the ground from the point of view of the African Union, with which we are fully in agreement.

In conclusion, I would like to associate myself with the words of the President in congratulating our colleague Mirjana Mladineo of Croatia, who unfortunately is leaving us. I wish her good luck in her new endeavour.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno and Special Envoy Eliasson for their briefings on the deployment of the peacekeeping Operation in Darfur and the latest developments in the political process.

Last July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1769 (2007), which crystallized the achievements of the international community to date in its efforts to promote the settlement of the question of Darfur. The Chinese Government pays great attention to the issue of Darfur. We firmly support the appropriate track strategy that promotes the political process and the deployment of the peacekeeping Operation in a balanced manner and seeks a resolution of the issue through dialogue and cooperation in a progressive and prudent manner.

Thanks to the enormous efforts of all parties, some progress has been made in the deployment of the peacekeeping Operation. This year, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) formally took over responsibility for peacekeeping in Darfur from the African Union (AU) Mission. Recently, the Secretariat, the African Union and the Government of the Sudan also held fruitful talks on some technical issues. China would like to express its appreciation to the Secretariat, the African Union and the Government of the Sudan for those efforts.

Facts prove that, so long as the parties can sit down to negotiate patiently and in good faith and a spirit of equal consultation, all issues can be settled. Of course, the Hybrid Operation has not proceeded as we expected. The number of troops deployed on the ground is far short of the target. The security environment is worsening. Equipment is yet to be fully delivered. Conditions are harsh. China hopes that all the parties concerned will demonstrate goodwill, build up mutual trust and pay particular attention to improving communications and coordination.

The problems that have occurred should be addressed through consultations. Recrimination should be avoided. The tripartite mechanism should be used as the main channel and should play an effective role in order to consolidate the progress made and facilitate a solution to the problems that have arisen.

It has to be pointed out that the implementation of resolution 1769 (2007) is not the exclusive responsibility of the Secretariat, the African Union or the Government of the Sudan. The international community must share that responsibility by providing the necessary resources, equipment and personnel, in particular the badly needed air and transportation assets. Only the joint efforts of the international community as a whole can enable the deployment of the Hybrid force on the ground without hindrance and its ability to play an effective role.

There is consensus among the entire international community as regards the need for the prompt deployment of the hybrid force. Its deployment is also eagerly awaited by the people of Darfur. All the parties concerned in Darfur, including the rebel groups, have an obligation to ensure the safety and security of all the peacekeepers. Threats of any kind are unacceptable. The hybrid force should also effectively strengthen security measures in order to ease the concerns of troop contributors.

The final outcome of the situation in Darfur will depend upon the success of the political process. The political process and the deployment of the peacekeeping Operation feed into one another. In the absence of a political peace agreement as a basis, there will be no peace to keep in Darfur. The peacekeeping Operation would lose all relevance.

China would like to express its gratitude to Special Envoys Eliasson and Salim for their efforts to promote the political process in Darfur. China supports the talks launched last October in Sirte.

Regrettably, however, the political process in Darfur lags far behind the deployment of the peacekeeping Operation. Major rebel groups continue

to be intransigent and are boycotting the negotiating process. China is deeply worried. We solemnly call upon those groups to put the overall interests of national stability and the well-being of the people of Darfur above everything else, to respond positively to the just cause of the international community and to make the right choice at an early date. The Security Council should also invest more energy in its efforts to facilitate the political process in Darfur. China also hopes that the country concerned will be able to exert greater influence to call upon the rebel groups to change their positions and take part in the negotiations.

Poverty and backwardness are the root causes of the issue of Darfur. By its very nature, this is a question of development. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pointed out just a few days ago when addressing the General Assembly, disputes over water resources are a major cause of the conflict in Darfur. In its efforts to facilitate the resolution of the issue of Darfur, the international community should address both symptoms and root causes. It should attach importance to social and economic development and provide humanitarian and development assistance. At the same time, however, only improving people's lives on the ground will fundamentally remove the cause of the conflict and improve the security environment.

As a responsible member of the international community, China has made a series of determined efforts to find a proper resolution of the question of Darfur. China will continue to work with the parties concerned through various channels in order to build up trust among them and narrow their differences.

In response to the appeal by the Secretariat, China sent troops to Darfur, and they were among the earliest to arrive on the ground. Most of the humanitarian assistance that China has provided to Darfur, totalling 80 million yuan renminbi, has been delivered and distributed. The Government of China has also provided support to the Chinese companies engaged in building schools, drilling wells and delivering water projects.

China will continue to join the international community in contributing to an early settlement of the Darfur issue and to the achievement of peace, stability and development in Darfur.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Let me begin by joining previous speakers in welcoming and expressing appreciation to the Special Envoy, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his briefing on the political process in Darfur and to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, for his update on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

My delegation would like to reiterate once again its continued support for Mr. Eliasson's untiring efforts, together with those of his counterpart from the African Union, Mr. Salim Salim, in the political process to find a durable negotiated political settlement to the Darfur issue. We believe it is essential that the Security Council reaffirm its continued support for that process as an irreversible one and to strongly signal to all parties our full backing for the Special Envoy's efforts.

We note in the report that the rebels have coalesced into five main factions. That has offered them the potential to come up with a common platform for negotiations. We underline the importance of their full participation in the negotiation process being facilitated by the Special Envoys of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations. Special Envoy Eliasson used the term "critical mass" in his briefing. It is absolutely essential that all sides support and contribute to the peace process, so that the suffering of the people in Darfur and in the Sudan as a whole can be alleviated without further delay.

It is also essential that all sides cease hostilities and desist from resorting to force, in order to permit progress on the political front. In addition to the political and peacekeeping phases, the cessation of hostilities and the ceasefire are one phase of the Addis Ababa conclusions of 2006 that has not yet been implemented. We need to more closely examine and explore ways to establish a sustainable cessation of hostilities, and we need to revitalize and go beyond previous ceasefire mechanisms. Creating conditions conducive to the political process is key.

The political process is the cornerstone of the international community's efforts to assist the Sudan in dealing with the Darfur issue. The deployment of UNAMID and the political process should be mutually reinforcing. We share the Secretary-General's view that the deployment of UNAMID will be only as effective as the political process that it is mandated to support. At the same time, it is our hope that UNAMID will be able to provide greater security on the ground for the civilian population and to provide greater impetus and confidence for the political process.

We therefore draw some encouragement from the important development with regard to the status-of-forces agreement and troop composition. Those are pertinent steps in UNAMID's deployment and should be recognized as such. We continue to believe in the efficacy of the Tripartite Mechanism — Secretariat/African Union/Government of the Sudan — in addressing issues relating to UNAMID's deployment.

We would like to echo the Secretary-General's statement earlier this week that UNAMID troop contributors must speed up their preparations so that they can be in theatre as soon as possible. Moreover, we recognize that it is important that those in the international community who are in a position to contribute critical aviation and ground transportation units do so.

The recent rebel incursions in Chad and the potential ramifications for our efforts in Darfur are reminders of the risks of delays in the Darfur political process. Indeed, the relations between the Sudan and Chad are essential for the stability of both countries. In that regard, we call on them to respect and secure their common border in accordance with their bilateral agreements, in particular the Tripoli and Riyadh agreements.

More than 4.2 million people in Darfur depend on humanitarian assistance. We commend the efforts of international humanitarian organizations to deliver assistance to those in need. It is deeply troubling that humanitarian workers have continued to be targets of violence and armed robberies. The Joint Communiqué on the facilitation of humanitarian activities should be supported and fully implemented. The Security Council should be ready to look at further measures against those attacking humanitarian workers operating in the service of those in need.

My delegation is convinced that progress on all fronts in Darfur — including the political, peacekeeping, ceasefire and humanitarian tracks — is essential in order to achieve a comprehensive peace. That requires a constructive approach and contributions by all parties, including the international community, the Government of the Sudan and the rebels. The centre of all these efforts, however, is obviously the political process. We wish Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Salim all the best in that endeavour.

Finally, I should like to wish our colleague the Permanent Representative of Croatia every success in her future endeavours.

Mr. Weisleder (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like preceding speakers, I thank Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur, for their briefings to the Council.

The situation in Darfur is a source of profound concern for Costa Rica. We are facing a humanitarian crisis that is deepening daily, despite the enormous efforts and resources deployed by the international community. Nevertheless, the Council must bear in mind that the humanitarian crisis is a manifestation and a consequence of a previous crisis — a political crisis, taken to extremes, that culminated in the irresponsible sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of persons, including a great number of women and children.

Therefore, in analysing the situation in Darfur and the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), we cannot lose sight of the fact that a solution to the humanitarian crisis will depend on a solution to the political crisis, which can be overcome only through a political process of consultation involving all the parties.

My Government calls on the parties to commit themselves to peace and to seek areas for dialogue and mechanisms for negotiation in order to resolve their differences. We applaud the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoys to that end.

This is an Organization of sovereign States — States with equal rights, but also equal responsibilities. Costa Rica is convinced that sovereignty is not so much a right as an obligation, and that the principal obligation of every State is to protect those who live within its territory. Therefore, we call respectfully but forcefully on the Government of the Sudan to exercise its sovereignty by protecting the hundreds of thousands of persons who are suffering daily the consequences of a fratricidal war.

We regret the increasing reports of crimes committed against civilian populations, including children, as well as the increase in the number of cases of sexual violence. We energetically condemn the use of those practices as tools of political pressure. Thus,

we reiterate the importance and validity of Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1612 (2005) and 1674 (2006).

The replacement of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) by the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) constituted an important step towards facilitating an effective solution to the conflict in Darfur. However, the implementation of the mandate entrusted to the new mission has been seriously compromised. The postponement yet again of the signature of the status-of-forces agreement by the Government of the Sudan, the absence of the team necessary to carry out the assigned functions and the precarious regional stability, particularly in regard to the relationship between Chad and Sudan, cast a dark shadow over the hopes of the thousands who are affected by this conflict.

Positive results in peacekeeping operations largely depend on the existence of conditions facilitating rapid and effective deployment offering maximum possible security guarantees to those who carry out these operations. Unfortunately, this remains a challenge to be overcome for UNAMID. Therefore, we vehemently echo the repeated appeals by the Secretary-General to the Government of Sudan to facilitate the full deployment of the mission as promptly as possible, and to Member States to provide the equipment and helicopters necessary to fulfil the mandate.

Justice is an essential component in the achievement of lasting peace. Perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity or the crime of genocide are attacking human dignity and the conscience of the international community, and should therefore be answerable to justice without delay.

Costa Rica restates its commitment to the International Criminal Court and would like to emphasize the obligation of the Government of Sudan to cooperate with that high Court, pursuant to resolution 1593 (2005). The international community's commitment to peace requires the Security Council to go beyond rhetoric and thus guarantee the implementation of its resolutions and of the mandates emanating from them.

We believe that the crisis in Darfur will not end merely through the adoption of resolutions by this collegial body; nor will the humanitarian needs of the affected populations be met by 15 votes. It is through constant and detailed monitoring of all aspects of the conflict, the effective requirement that the provisions adopted by this body be enforced, the timely assignment of responsibility and support for the sincere desire of the parties to overcome obstacles and the underlying conflicts that the maintenance of international peace and security in the region will ultimately be guaranteed.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Mr. President, we thank you for conducting this meeting today. Let me welcome Mr. Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur, whom some of us prefer to remember fondly as President of the General Assembly. I also welcome Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and thank him for his briefing. I also welcome my boss, Her Excellency Mrs. Lila Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, and thank her for her statement.

My delegation supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy, Mr. Jan Eliasson, and his African Union colleague, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, in continuing to intensify consultations, engagements and mediation with the Government of Sudan and the non-signatory movements. For us, the political process is also a key pillar of the peace process in the Sudan. Therefore, its success is just as important to us as everything else that is being done there.

For this reason, we welcome the reported progress in terms of the unification efforts of the movements during the course of November and December, but we remain concerned that such coalitions are rather fragile. In fact, having listened closely to Mr. Eliasson, one gets the impression that the political process is going very, very slowly, to say the least. I wonder if, at the end of our meeting, Mr. Eliasson could perhaps suggest ways in which the Council could assist him and Mr. Salim in moving this process forward.

We note with concern that the earlier fragmentation of various rebel factions has persisted, that not much commitment has been shown by some of them and that some are still putting preconditions on their participation. In this regard, my delegation calls upon the leaders of these rebel movements to join the political process by moving swiftly on their common positions. Clearly, the Security Council should be able to take firm action against those who wilfully delay their participation in these negotiations, choosing

instead to engage in violent action against the innocent people of Darfur, who have already suffered more than enough.

We call upon the international community to also do everything it can to ensure that everybody joins the peace process without conditions, because the peace talks are a critical element in the solution of the Darfur conflict.

We appreciate the progress that has been made so far with regard to the implementation of resolution 1769 (2007), especially the re-hatting of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), which has been referred to earlier. We urge the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of the Sudan to further accelerate this process and ensure that UNAMID is fully deployed. We commend the progress achieved in the finalization of the status-of-forces agreement. Clearly, the success of UNAMID depends on the cooperation of all the parties involved. In this regard, we want to stress the need for ongoing dialogue among the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of Sudan.

My delegation remains concerned that the process of generating aviation and ground transportation units has not been successful so far. As has been repeatedly pointed out, these capabilities are indispensable not only for the timely deployment of UNAMID, but also for the implementation of its mandate. We believe that a robust and effective UNAMID will contribute to long-term stability in Darfur.

Another major issue of concern is the threat against the civilian population along the border with Chad, along with recent attempts to destabilize the Government of Chad by force. All necessary steps should be taken to ensure the security of the civilian population, the displaced people and women and children in Darfur. Conditions should be created to enable humanitarian assistance to reach the sections of the population in need.

The situation in Darfur has occupied the attention of the international community for a long time, and we appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and others in making the issue a priority.

My delegation remains concerned that the deterioration in the security situation on the ground and the renewed tensions in the relationship between the Sudan and Chad are complicating the search for a political settlement in Darfur. We continue to stress that a solution in Darfur lies in a political settlement. Nonetheless, there is a window of opportunity for peace through a political dialogue and negotiations and, to support that, through the deployment of a peacekeeping force that can help make a difference.

We would like to reiterate the poignant point that peace in the Sudan is indivisible. In that regard, my delegation is pleased that there is a close coordination between the United Nations Mission in Sudan, UNAMID and the work of the Special Envoys.

Finally, allow me to bid farewell to Ambassador Mladineo, who I have always called my sister in the Council. Now the rest of my term in the Council will be sisterless, and I think that will be very boring.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, in turn, to thank Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Guéhenno for their briefings. They have both emphasized the tireless efforts of the Secretariat and the African Union, which my delegation would like to welcome, but they have also shown that there is still a long way to go to achieve peace in Darfur and particularly to re-establish security conditions that will make it possible for the people to return to their villages and to their lands. That is our ultimate objective.

Our first concern is the security of the population. Now more than ever, we are concerned by the continued violence against civilians and attacks against the humanitarian workers who are endeavouring to assist them. While the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate, deliberate restrictions on humanitarian access on the ground have remained in place since last year. To date, those restrictions have seriously affected hundreds of thousands of individuals deprived of all assistance. France condemns in the strongest possible terms the attacks against humanitarian personnel, which increased by 150 per cent in 2007, and appeals to all parties to genuinely cease hostilities and ensure humanitarian access to those who need assistance.

In that connection, we note with satisfaction the extension by the Government of the Sudan of the moratorium on humanitarian access restrictions, and we urge the authorities in Khartoum to ensure its full implementation to facilitate the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The situation's overall insecurity should encourage us to redouble our efforts to ensure the rapid deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We are aware that the Secretary-General and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are doing all they can, in conjunction with the African Union, rapidly to assemble a credible — that is, robust — force that truly is in a position to protect the population and thus to renew the population's confidence in it, which is so essential, as Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno stated earlier.

We call on the Sudanese authorities to support the United Nations and the African Union, as they have committed to doing on several occasions, and to keep their word, rather than increasing the number of conditions — sometimes contrary to United Nations principles and rules — that delay the Operation's deployment and compromise its effectiveness. The proposals made by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations seem to be realistic, and we feel that the Council should support them clearly.

That same concern for the security of the population leads us to call for the rapid deployment of the European Union force and of the United Nations Mission in eastern Chad and north-eastern Central African Republic. UNAMID, on the one hand, and the European Union force and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), on the other, are designed to meet the same humanitarian crisis, which has not stopped at the border of the Sudan. Sudanese refugees in Chad and the displaced persons and other vulnerable populations on both sides of the border and in the Central African Republic all deserve to be protected and to receive assistance.

The recent crisis in Chad, caused by an attempt by rebel groups to take power by force and condemned by the African Union and the Security Council, has delayed the deployment. That was, indeed, probably one of the objectives of the rebels and of their protectors. It remains an urgent situation, and we therefore welcome the intention of the European Union to resume its operations in the coming days, as soon as the security conditions allow. We also welcome the appeal recently launched by President Idriss Deby Itno for the continuation of the humanitarian operation in eastern Chad.

Clearly, Darfur will not achieve lasting stability without the conclusion of the political process being conducted by Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim. We call on all parties to face up to their responsibilities. Each side states that it is acting in Darfur's interest; they must now prove it. Those who continue to engage in violence must lay down their weapons immediately, in keeping with their successive public commitments. Those who have stayed away from the negotiating table should join it while there is still time. France, for its part, is working to that end, as requested by Mr. Eliasson and Mr. Salim.

My delegation would like to reiterate its support for the approach taken by the two mediators to bring civil society into the discussion. We strongly support the idea that the political process involves not only the warring parties, but also representatives of the victims of the violence and who are the very reason for our commitment to resolving the crisis. In particular, the voices of those hundreds of thousands who have been displaced must be heard.

Lastly, my delegation ardently hopes that the crimes committed in Darfur will not go unpunished. The International Criminal Court should pursue its activities with regard to the most serious crimes, some of the perpetrators of which are unfortunately still being protected by the Sudanese authorities.

Before concluding, and on a happier note, allow me to join others in wishing our colleague and friend, the Ambassador of Croatia, every success in her future work at the United Nations in defending our principles and the values of human rights and human dignity.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to echo the thanks that have been offered to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his efforts to resolve the situation in Darfur and to promote peace and security both in the province and in Africa as a whole. We should also like to welcome Mr. Jan Eliasson and thank him for his very useful briefing to the Security Council. We commend his endeavours carried out together with Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the African Union envoy. We reiterate our support for the Secretariat's decision to extend Mr. Eliasson's mandate. We would also like to thank Mr. Guéhenno for his briefing. I welcome the Permanent Observer of the African Union and thank her for her statement.

Mr. Eliasson's briefing reflects the efforts he has made in recent months, together with his colleague, to persuade all parties to sit down at the negotiating table, to unify the movements and coordinate their positions, and to relaunch the negotiations that began in Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, in October 2007. We believe that that mission should be commended, as it clearly reflects the difficulties that remain to be overcome, chief among which is the absence of some factions from the peace process.

Regarding the crisis in Darfur, we must emphasize the fact that peace cannot be achieved unless a comprehensive peace process is launched and the conditions are established to make the process a reality. My delegation would stress certain aspects of the issue.

First, we welcome the approach adopted by the two Special Envoys with respect to consulting with the various parties to unify the movements and coordinate their positions with a view to preparing objective consultations in Sirt. We are aware of the mission's complexity, as Mr. Eliasson emphasized, but our efforts must be maintained and contacts pursued in that regard.

Secondly, if the political process is to be successful, all participants must cease hostilities forthwith and take part in the peace negotiations without prior conditions, thereby preventing their positions from being linked to the speed of deployment and the size of the force in Darfur. That is a most important consideration.

Thirdly, we are deeply concerned by the stance of certain groups that continue to refuse to participate in the political process and to snub their noses at the negotiation efforts. We reiterate the importance to some parties, including this Council, for appropriate pressure to be brought to bear on those groups to reconsider their position and decide to join the political process, thereby demonstrating their good intentions without preconditions. The Council must adopt the necessary measures regarding those groups.

Fourthly, Libya is closely following current developments in Darfur, with which it shares a border, and hopes to provide every possibly assistance to achieving peace and security in the province. Libya has a great interest in accelerating the political process and will continue to lend its support to the two mediators and to play an effective role, particularly in extending its good offices. We appeal once again to the rebels to join the political process and commit to meeting objective criteria, including a ceasefire, and to facilitating humanitarian work.

With respect to the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), I commend the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Government of the Sudan to address the technical aspects of deployment. We also welcome the positive consensual attitude that prevailed at the meeting between President Bashir and the Secretary-General on the margins of the recent African Union summit in Addis Ababa, as well as the ensuing progress, which reflects other advances achieved, in particular the negotiation of the status-of-forces agreement. We hope that the agreement will be signed tomorrow. Indeed, the Secretary-General raised that issue in his most recent statement, in which he expressed his satisfaction with the cooperation extended by the Sudanese authorities in facilitating the deployment of the Hybrid Operation. We hope that this course can be pursued in order to strengthen confidence and alleviate tensions with the Government of the Sudan. We are convinced that the Sudanese Government is doing its utmost to facilitate the deployment of the Hybrid Operation and to promote the political process.

For our part, we remain concerned by the international community's inability to establish the conditions in which UNAMID can be deployed, particularly with respect to land and air assets. In that regard, we thank those States that are in a position to respond to that matter and that have contributed to the Hybrid Operation. It is indeed extremely important to emphasize the African contribution to control and command within the Operation, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1769 (2007) and other consequent relevant decisions.

We are concerned by the violence that has erupted in Chad, claiming many innocent lives. We express our apprehension concerning the current tensions and reciprocal accusations between Chad and the Sudan. Relations between those two brotherly neighbours have an impact on the security and humanitarian situation on both sides of the border, with negative repercussions for the peace efforts in Darfur and the region as a whole. We therefore appeal to the two parties to relaunch dialogue towards the implementation of the Tripoli Agreement of 8 February

2006 to guarantee security along their common border. That would surely alleviate the suffering of refugees and internally displaced persons, help to achieve a peaceful settlement, and create the objective conditions for ending the conflicts in Darfur and Chad.

Lastly, we extend our best wishes to the Ambassador of Croatia and thank her for all her hard work in the Organization. As she will be leaving us shortly, we wish her every success in her new endeavours.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur, Mr. Eliasson, and to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Guéhenno, for their comprehensive briefing on progress on the political track of a settlement in Darfur and the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

We are convinced that a settlement in Darfur lies exclusively in the political sphere through negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and Darfur rebels. New peace agreements between Khartoum and the Darfur opposition must become the future support structure for the restoration of peace and security in the Sudanese region.

We believe that resuming the negotiating process launched in Sirt is a priority. Without success in the Darfur-Darfur dialogue, it will be impossible to improve the humanitarian situation and successfully to ensure UNAMID's fulfilment of its mandate. We fully subscribe to the calls regarding the need for a comprehensive solution. We express our clear commitment to work towards that in the Council.

In conclusion, Mr. President, allow me to say just a few words on a personal level. I would like to thank you and all my colleagues around the table for the nice words extended to me, including the words of encouragement in connection with my future position.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I wish to thank Special Envoy Eliasson and Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for their briefings and their tireless efforts to advance the agreed agenda for Darfur. I also wish to thank Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer of the African Union (AU), for her contribution to our debate.

Italy supports the early and swift deployment of a robust peacekeeping force in Darfur to protect civilians and assist in the implementation of the agreements between the Government and the rebels. We hope that the status-of-forces agreement can be signed without further delay, as agreed by the Secretary-General and the President of the Sudan at the margins of the African Union Summit.

We welcome the progress reported by Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno, particularly on the issue of the participation of non-African countries — although it is regrettable that the Nordic countries will eventually not be part of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

Italy shares the assessment of the Secretary-General that UNAMID will be only as effective as the political process it is mandated to support. For us, consistent with the Addis Ababa conclusions of November 2006, the political and peacekeeping tracks are equally important and mutually reinforcing. Urgent progress is therefore needed in the political process as well.

I wish to reiterate Italy's full support for a joint United Nations-AU mediation. It is fundamental that we all rally behind the efforts of the two Envoys aimed at consolidating a critical mass among the rebel movements that could allow the process to move forward. We invite all rebel movements to seize the current opportunity for full direct negotiations with the Government. Continuing the fighting can no longer be an option once that opportunity is in hand.

Italy is pleased to have contributed $511,000 to the trust fund in support of the joint mediation. We will soon provide additional funds, both for that and for the United Nations-Darfur Community Peace and Stability Fund.

Italy was impressed by the attendance of a number of representatives from Darfur civil society at the Sirte opening ceremony. We believe that civil society has a lot to say about how the conflict should be settled and how the agreement should be implemented. We hope that its participation in the talks can continue. We also look forward to further progress in the Darfur-Darfur dialogue and reconciliation process.

We remain concerned at the lack of progress in the humanitarian situation. The extension of the moratorium on restrictions to humanitarian organizations by the Government is a welcome step

that needs to be accompanied by renewed commitment by all parties in Darfur to allow unhindered access to humanitarian aid.

Italy is also concerned about the human rights situation in the region, in particular for women and children. The latest report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Darfur provides a sobering account of that reality. Italy looks forward to discussing that report in the Working Group soon.

The importance of regional actors in settling the Darfur conflict cannot be underestimated. It is vital that Chad and the Sudan recommit themselves to the Sirte process, resolve their differences through dialogue and re-establish cooperative relations, which are necessary for peace and stability in the region.

Let me also recall that there can be no impunity for the crimes committed in Darfur. Italy supports the opinion and conclusions of the Council of the European Union on 28 January and its call on the Government of the Sudan to cooperate with the International Criminal Court.

The Security Council adopted a very important presidential statement (S/PRST/2007/41) on the eve of the opening of the Sirte meeting. The Council underlined its willingness to take action against any party that sought to undermine the peace process, including by failing to respect the cessation of hostilities or by impeding the talks, peacekeeping or humanitarian aid. We think that that statement very well reflects the sense of frustration of the international community over the slow progress and the prevailing impunity for what has happened in Darfur. I fully concur with Special Envoy Eliasson when he said that there must be a price for the lack of cooperation. Our question is about the timing for such a price and whether there is anything that the Council can do now in that respect.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): Allow me to begin by joining my colleagues in saying how much we will miss Ambassador Mladineo at the Council. We very much enjoyed her presence and wish her the very best of luck in her next position.

I would also like to join others in thanking Mr. Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for their briefings this morning.

The Council was closely engaged on Darfur throughout 2007. The scale of the crisis and the impact it has on the lives of millions of people and the stability of the region fully justified that engagement. I wish I could say that our efforts in 2007 have made the task in 2008 less formidable. But as both briefings we heard this morning indicate, that is not the case. In particular, what has come through is the interdependence of progress on the security track and progress on the political track. We have to persist with both in parallel.

I am just receiving some worrying reports of a further downturn in security in western Darfur. There are reports of attacks on villages by Sudanese Government forces, including aerial bombings, and extensive loss of life. That is further destruction to the process in the region. It is of great regret that that is happening. We call on all parties to bring an immediate end to this fighting. It will be helpful if, at the end of this discussion, Mr. Guéhenno could give us any further information that he may have on events today.

I think this continued fighting only serves to underline the need to make progress on all four tracks facing us in the Sudan, in Darfur.

First, on the peacekeeping side, as others have said, the transfer of authority from the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) is a welcome step. We in the British Government are committed to doing all we can to make UNAMID and effective mission. But it still faces significant challenges. Those include, first, the sourcing of enough troops and equipment, including helicopters. In that connection, my delegation will continue our efforts in support of the Secretariat. The second challenge pertains to enhancing the support infrastructure required to maintain a large mission in a difficult environment. And the third challenge has to do with inconsistent cooperation from the Sudanese Government and bureaucratic obstacles to making things happen on the ground.

The steps reported by Mr. Guéhenno, and by the Secretary-General earlier this week, on the status-of-forces agreement and the deployment of non-African contingents are welcome. I am sure that I am not alone among Council members in expecting those commitments to be translated into facts on the ground without further delay.

Other issues critical to the effectiveness of the mission remain outstanding, notably movement at night. The protection of civilians cannot cease when the sun sets. We look to the Government of the Sudan to resolve those issues promptly. I would welcome confirmation from Mr. Guéhenno that the revised status-of-forces agreement will provide an adequate basis for UNAMID's effective operation.

The second track is the political process, which in the long term is the only reliable path to peace. We are very grateful to Jan Eliasson and his fellow Envoy Salim Salim for their efforts. We see some signs of movement in Mr. Eliasson's report on the positions of the respective rebel organizations. Despite the difficulties and frustrations, we need to keep up the momentum. But it is clear that — as some of us have said for some time — a longer-term perspective is needed and must be pursued on multiple tracks in parallel. We welcome Mr. Eliasson's intention to do precisely that. The deployment of peacekeeping forces will no doubt help to strengthen security, but cannot guarantee the comprehensive settlement of the situation. The key role in the political process, under the aegis of the United Nations and the African Union, rests of course with the parties involved, acting with the active support of the regional players.

We highly appreciate the effective efforts of Special Envoys Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim in holding consultations with the Government of the Sudan and the Darfur opposition with a view to preparing the parties for negotiations on items of substance. We are pleased to hear that there has been significant progress in uniting the various Darfur rebel groups but there is a great deal of arduous work to be done to persuade the opposition to agree to their negotiation platform and the membership of their delegation.

In that connection, we welcome the extension by the Secretary-General of the mandate of the mediator, Mr. Jan Eliasson. Of note is the idea to enhance the activities of the negotiation team of the Special Envoys through the appointment of a single negotiator. We believe that would lead not to weakening the Joint Mediation Support Team, but to strengthened coordination and effectiveness of its activities.

We are seriously concerned by the intransigent stand taken by the Justice and Equality Movement. The question arises of the possible use of restrictive measures with regard to those rebel leaders who not only openly obstruct progress in the Darfur political process, but are also threatening the security of peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel. In any case, the Security Council must send them a very clear and firm signal on the immediate need to reconsider their destructive position.

The transfer of authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan to UNAMID was an important milestone in the peacekeeping process in Darfur. The Secretariat and the African Union have done an impressive amount of work to ensure that UNAMID can undertake its mandate in the time frame established by Security Council resolution 1769 (2007). We must work consistently to strengthen UNAMID's effectiveness, as was mentioned today by Mr. Guéhenno.

The problem remains of how to integrate the necessary helicopters into UNAMID. Russia is prepared to cooperate with its partners and the Secretariat to develop new potential options to solve that urgent problem. Of continued relevance is the Secretary-General's thesis that the effective functioning of UNAMID will depend to a great extent on the ability of the United Nations and the African Union to solve, in cooperation with the Government of the Sudan, comprehensive technical questions pertaining to the deployment of the Operation. That will require cooperation on the part of both parties.

As experience has shown, and in particular the visit of Mr. Guéhenno to Addis Ababa, the current problems require constructive dialogue with the Sudanese leadership. We are pleased that, during the course of the meeting of the Secretary-General and the President of the Sudan at the margins of the African Union summit in Addis Ababa, the need to hasten the deployment of the Operation and to immediately conclude the status-of-forces agreement for UNAMID was reaffirmed. Of course, a comprehensive settlement in Darfur is impossible without a normalization of the regional security situation and relations between Chad and the Sudan on the basis of unconditional compliance by the States of the region with the existing agreements, in particular the agreement ensuring security in the border area.

For its part, Russia is determined in future to constructively promote progress in the Darfur peace

process on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Sudan.

Mrs. Mladineo (Croatia): I wish to thank Mr. Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur, and Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for the detailed, precise and frank reports that they presented to the Council today.

In principle, we believe that true progress on the political track represents the essence of a sustainable solution. The volatility of the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur, where a simple spark could ignite a full-size inferno, makes the need for a tangible result on the political track even more obvious to all. In that sense, we commend and fully support the work of the United Nations and African Union Special Envoys.

We have been listening carefully to the assessment and comments made by Mr. Eliasson and cannot but be concerned by what can be described as the modest developments achieved so far. Despite his and Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim's praiseworthy efforts and the progress achieved so far, we see that much more time is needed in order to launch meaningful and substantial negotiations.

Having said that, we recognize that there are somewhat encouraging steps on the technical level. In that sense we reiterate our full support for the path taken by the Special Envoys. We hope that their low-key approach, including workshops intended to create a positive atmosphere and their preference for Arusha-style meetings, will result in a favourable outcome.

However, we feel that at this point we need a clear demonstration of political will from all parties in order to put the process on track. In that sense we highly value the assistance of the regional and other partners in encouraging the parties to the conflict to sit and negotiate around the table.

We echo Mr. Eliasson's words that there cannot be real progress on the political track in the midst of a hostile environment. We join his calls for an immediate ceasefire and for all parties, in particular the Government, to take responsibility for improving the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur. We share the urgency expressed, not only around this table or exclusively among Security Council members, when it comes to the full deployment and operability of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Mr. Guéhenno's forthright briefing, however, leaves little room for optimism.

Nevertheless, we find the engagement of the Sudanese Government in recent talks with UNAMID encouraging. We hope they will deliver on the promises, in particular those related to the signing of the status-of-forces agreement. Furthermore, we are entitled to expect the speedy solution of all outstanding issues relating to the development and effective exercise of the UNAMID mandate, namely accepting the proposed list of troop-contributing countries, granting flight clearances and facilitating the access of UNAMID to land and water and its freedom of movement. Finally, we hope that the Sudanese Government will fully embrace the view that the mission's mandate is solely to the benefit of the Sudanese people.

My delegation continues to believe in the three-track approach covering political, humanitarian and security matters. However, the rule of law should not be forgotten. Thus, we see the judicial dimension as not only complementary but also mutually reinforcing and intrinsic to the above-mentioned three-track approach. In that respect, we express our grave concern about the possibility of the culture of impunity taking firm root in the Sudan.

We also express our deep concern about the high level of grave violence and abuse committed against women and children in the Sudan, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, mostly committed against girls. These outrageous practices must be stopped.

Finally, allow me to conclude with a remark on the indivisibility of peace in the Sudan. Darfur, in our view should not be addressed in isolation from the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Those that are standing outside the peace process — and there are several — need to see that there is a cost to them in doing so. We agree that all sides must commit themselves to and honour a cessation of hostilities agreement that can be effectively monitored by UNAMID. We believe that the Envoy's proposal for the appointment of a single joint United Nations-African Union mediator is a good one and that it should be taken forward promptly.

The third track is the ongoing humanitarian emergency in Darfur. We share the concerns expressed by others. It is deeply worrying that, after all the efforts over so many years, the humanitarian situation continues to worsen and attacks on aid workers continue to rise. The result is less protection for the most vulnerable people. Access for humanitarian assistance is again under threat. It is essential that we see full implementation of the agreements reached under the joint humanitarian communiqué between the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations.

The fourth track is impunity. I share the concerns of several colleagues and their dismay at the total lack of progress in holding to account those indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. Those indictments will not go away. Justice will be an integral part of lasting peace in Darfur. The appointment of Musa Hilal, who was sanctioned by the Security Council under its resolution 1672 (2006), to a Sudanese Government position is a further concern. It will not advance the peace process.

Allow me to conclude with two points about the situation beyond Darfur, which are nonetheless critical to resolving the crisis in that region. First, in Chad, the Council made clear on Monday the urgency of all sides ending the fighting (see S/PRST/2008/3). I would like to underline that Council members also called on States to end any support to armed groups in the Sudan and Chad; that appeal is directed primarily at the Governments of those two countries.

Finally, Council members will return to the issue of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement later this month, when we hear from Mr. Qazi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Sudan. But in any consideration of the Sudan, we have to bear in mind that implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is fundamental to future peace across the country, including in Darfur. That is a goal to which my Government is totally committed.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for their briefings at the outset of our debate. Also, we listened carefully to the statement of our colleague, the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

Let me begin by stating Belgium's grave concern at recent events in Chad. There is no chance that peace will return to Darfur unless the Sudan and Chad, with the support of all countries of the region, work urgently to normalize their relations. Internal developments in the Sudan and Chad are a reflection of their bilateral relations, and vice versa. The constant movement of rebel movements back and forth across the border can only exacerbate tension between the two countries. Normalization of relations between the Sudan and Chad is thus in their common interest, and we earnestly hope that we can count on the active commitment of Khartoum and N'Djamena towards emerging from the current negative situation.

In that context, Belgium reaffirms its firm commitment to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) and to the European Union operation in Chad and the Central African Republic (EUFOR Tchad/RCA). We hope that they will be deployed, as planned, as soon as circumstances on the ground allow, which we hope will be in the coming days.

The full and effective deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) remains a considerable challenge to the international community. Belgium welcomes the forthcoming deployment of the Egyptian and Ethiopian contingents, along with that of Thai and Nepalese units, which will finally enable us to move from the re-hatted African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) to a new hybrid mission, as mandated by the Council. We regret, however, that the deployment of non-African units has been so difficult; we cannot accept the authority that the Sudanese Government claims over the admissibility of the contributions of countries to the Council-mandated force.

The UNAMID hybrid mission is unprecedented and thus an innovation; we are organizing it jointly with the African Union. Belgium congratulates the new leaders elected by the African Union, in particular President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete as African Union Chairman and Mr. Jean Ping as Chairman of the African Union Commission, and urges them to do their utmost to ensure the success of UNAMID, including by bringing their full influence to bear on the Sudanese Government to make the smooth deployment of the mission possible. We welcome the statement made earlier by Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations,

in which she recalled the Union's firm commitment to discharging its responsibilities.

Belgium notes that the tripartite negotiating mechanism with the Khartoum Government has borne some fruit, including in negotiations on the terms of a status-of-forces agreement. But it is imperative that the Sudanese Government commit itself further to keeping President Al-Bashir's promise to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to accelerate the deployment of the mission and to resolve all outstanding issues related to that deployment. We are told that the tension in the refugee camps is increasing; it is time for UNAMID to be set on a solid footing and to be able at last to do its work.

There is hardly any need to recall that UNAMID must restore a minimum level of security to Darfur, which would facilitate humanitarian assistance. But it should also permit progress in the ongoing political process; Mr. Eliasson has briefed us on the latest developments in that process, which are unfortunately not particularly encouraging. For the process to have a real chance at getting under way, it is imperative that hostilities on the ground end immediately. As a matter of urgency, all parties to the conflict must commit themselves to a lasting ceasefire. It is unacceptable that the parties should hold the civilian population hostage by pursuing agendas that have no room for genuine peace.

I listened very carefully to Mr. Eliasson's briefing on the most recent developments in the political process, which we hope will be inclusive and credible. Like Mr. Eliasson, I deplore the fact that several rebel movements are not prepared to engage in this process, and I encourage him and his African Union counterpart, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, to persevere in their efforts to convince the movements that the Government would find them a credible interlocutor if they pursued common objectives. Belgium regrets in particular that the Justice and Equality Movement of Mr. Khalil Ibrahim continues to favour a military solution over a political process.

Peace in the Sudan is indivisible, and the question of Darfur is intimately linked to the overall peace process in the Sudan. Let me only say how much Belgium welcomes the outcome of last autumn's governmental crisis; we once again encourage the parties to continue and hasten the concrete implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The implementation of the Agreement could serve as an example for Darfur. Credible and rapid implementation could convince the movements that are still hesitating to commit themselves to the political process towards a peace agreement that would be to the benefit of all parties.

I cannot conclude without emphasizing once again a major priority of my delegation: the fight against impunity. Here, the Sudan has a twofold obligation: to cooperate with the International Criminal Court pursuant to resolution 1593 (2005); and to implement the restrictive measures imposed by the Security Council. Without wishing to confuse the two issues, Belgium deplores the recent appointment of Mr. Musa Hilal — who appears on the sanctions Committee's list of individuals and entities — as a Government adviser. That is in addition to the unfortunate fact that two individuals indicted by the International Criminal Court, including Mr. Ahmed Haroun, have yet to be transferred to The Hague.

Before concluding, I wish to join my colleagues in bidding farewell to our much-respected colleague from Croatia. We have greatly appreciated not only her friendship and collegiality here at the United Nations, but also her personal commitment to the cause of world peace and the well-being of humanity.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): We greatly appreciate the briefings provided today by Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno and Special Envoy Eliasson. We thank them for their efforts to bring a sustainable peace to the region. We also thank Permanent Observer Ratsifandrihamanana of the African Union (AU) for her statement. In addition, we are grateful to the Secretary-General for his personal engagement on Darfur issues, including his recent trip to Africa, about which he briefed the Council on Tuesday.

The rapid deployment of an effective peacekeeping force for Darfur and finding a lasting political settlement to the conflict are both of critical importance to my country. This morning, I would like to cover those two issues and also address the impact of the Chad conflict on the future of the region.

We were pleased by the Secretary-General's briefing to the Security Council on 5 February, in which he reported — as Mr. Guéhenno did today — progress in discussions with the Sudanese on the deployment of the African Union-United Nations

Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We hope that a breakthrough has indeed been achieved.

As always with the Government of the Sudan, the proof of its commitment is in its actions. If the Sudanese are truly committed to UNAMID's deployment, we expect the following to happen in the coming weeks.

First, we expect the status-of-forces agreement to be signed on 10 February. The United States urges the Sudanese Government to cooperate fully with UNAMID to finalize that agreement without further delay, including the outstanding issues of aviation and ground movements. The agreement must incorporate the same principles that apply to United Nations peacekeeping missions anywhere in the world.

Secondly, the United States expects that the Government of the Sudan will cooperate fully with the upcoming deployments of UNAMID forces. The Egyptian engineer, signal and heavy transport unit should deploy by 10 March, followed by Egyptian and Ethiopian infantry battalions in March and April. The Thai infantry battalion should deploy within an April time frame. If the Sudanese Government does not deliver on those steps in a timely manner, then the Security Council will need to consider appropriate action to ensure compliance. The credibility of the Security Council is on the line.

I now turn to the role of the international community. Like other delegations, we urge redoubled efforts to ensure that UNAMID can fill its force generation gaps, including by filling the critical need for air, logistical and transport assets. We were encouraged to hear that the Government of Ethiopia has offered helicopters that appear to meet some of UNAMID's requirements, and we look forward to hearing formally from the United Nations about the prospects for the deployment of those assets.

The United States, for its part, is committed to assisting UNAMID deployment through the training and equipping of certain African troop-contributing countries that have made pledges to UNAMID. We have provided the United Nations with more than $40-million worth of equipment to be used by UNAMID. We have allocated an additional $100 million to train and equip troop-contributing countries. We urge other members to join us in a coordinated effort to ensure that UNAMID troop-contributing countries arrive in Darfur trained and equipped to carry out their mission.

With regard to the peace process, it is clear that we have not made enough progress. Success in the Darfur peace process, led by the United Nations and the African Union, is essential to ending the suffering of the people of Darfur and to the long-term prospects for success of the United Nations/AU peacekeeping operation in Darfur — UNAMID.

We continue to urge rebel factions to come together in order to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and we support the Special Envoy's effort to unify the rebel movements. We think that that effort needs more consistent attention from the international community. We strongly urge the United Nations and the AU to quickly agree upon the immediate appointment of a single joint mediator to lead the negotiations and to assist all parties in reaching a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

The recent conflict in Chad underscores the regional dimension of the conflict in the area. With regard to Darfur, in addition to the humanitarian, political and UNAMID tracks, the United Nations effort also needs to be focused on developing an effective regional approach. To that end, we need to fully deploy the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad as soon as possible.

We are very disturbed by reports that the Government of the Sudan played a significant role in supporting the rebel attack on the legitimate Government of Chad. We call on the Sudan, Chad and rebel groups to cease all cross-border incursions. We urge the Sudan and Chad not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. Those are necessary steps for a lasting and sustainable peace in the region.

Like other speakers, I wish my Croatian colleague all the best in her next endeavour; we will miss her. I also wish my Chinese colleagues a happy new year.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Envoy Eliasson and Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for their informative briefings to the Council. Our thanks go also to Mrs. Ratsifandrihamanana for her presence and for her briefing to the Council this morning. I am sure that those briefings have been of much help to the

Council in considering this very important matter in today's debate.

Against the backdrop of the recent disturbing violence that has taken place in various parts of the subregion, the Vietnamese delegation welcomes the recent positive developments with regard to Darfur and the Sudan. We commend the active and good-faith efforts made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and President Al-Bashir of the Sudan on the sidelines of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa on 31 January 2008 to facilitate the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

In that connection, Viet Nam also welcomes the agreement reached between the Government of the Sudan and the United Nations on the initial draft of the status-of-forces agreement and the announcement of the Sudanese Government regarding its readiness to sign that agreement as soon as tomorrow. My country believes that the agreement will expedite the full deployment of UNAMID. That fruitful outcome of the talks has once again underlined the importance of dialogue, consultations and cooperation between the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of the Sudan.

At the same time, we cannot afford to ignore the fact that, given the current lack of troops and support equipment, UNAMID can hardly ensure the effective discharge of its mandate. We therefore call on the international community and all countries in a position to do so to make substantial contributions to UNAMID, as requested by the United Nations and the African Union and as proposed by the Sudanese Government.

We hope that all the parties concerned will cooperate and work together to resolve the outstanding technical bottlenecks in the way of UNAMID's full deployment. In particular, we urge the rebel movements in Darfur to renounce violence, join the peace and political process and cooperate with the United Nations and the African Union in facilitating the deployment of UNAMID.

We wish to stress here that the parties concerned must build on the momentum created by the August 2007 Arusha peace talks under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union as well as the Sirte process launched by Libya in October last year, and actively respond to the good offices efforts by the United Nations and the African Union that are under way.

My delegation would like to reiterate Viet Nam's strong support for the full and rapid deployment of UNAMID in conformity with the mandate set forth in resolution 1769 (2007). It is our conviction that a full and effective deployment of UNAMID in Darfur will help to restore peace and stability not only in Darfur and the Sudan but also in other countries in this subregion, namely, Chad and the Central African Republic.

In parallel with the peacekeeping track and UNAMID deployment, the international community and regional countries must devote equal attention and contributions to pushing forward the political process in Darfur and the Sudan with a view to finding a just and lasting solution to the Darfur conflict.

We would also like to emphasize that the peace and political process in Darfur cannot be divorced from the North-South peace and political process in the Sudan, especially the implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Peace, stability and prosperity will be achieved in Darfur and the Sudan only if all parties concerned jointly address the root causes of the conflict by taking a comprehensive approach to security and political and socio-economic development so as not to give biased priority to one issue at the expense of the others.

The Vietnamese delegation fully shares the observation made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 5 February of this year that "the deployment of UNAMID will only be as effective as the political process it is mandated to support". With this idea in mind, we feel encouraged by such positive developments as the return of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to the Government of National Unity last December, the signing by President Bashir of the national strategic plan for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the return of over 2 million refugees and internally displaced persons to south Sudan since the conclusion of the 2005 CPA. Once fully realized, these efforts will make a huge contribution to the overall peace and political process in Darfur and in the Sudan at large.

My delegation also hails the ongoing efforts made by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Jan Eliasson, as well as the African Union Special Envoy for Darfur, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, especially

during their visit to the Sudan last January to help organize the talks between the Sudanese Government and the rebel movements. We fully agree that their efforts should enjoy strong support from the Security Council and the United Nations.

Furthermore, I would like to join all of my colleagues in extending our best wishes to the Permanent Representative of Croatia as she takes on her future responsibilities.

Finally, I would like to conclude by reaffirming the Vietnamese Government's unwavering support for the efforts made by the United Nations and African countries for the full and effective deployment of UNAMID in particular and in bringing about peaceful resolutions to conflicts in Africa in general.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now will make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Panama.

I would like to begin by thanking Ambassador Jan Eliasson and Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno, for their detailed briefings on advances in the political process and the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We draw attention to the endeavours of Ambassador Eliasson and his counterpart in the African Union, Ambassador Salim Salim, in establishing dialogue between the parties to the conflict and the individuals affected. We welcome the decision by the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of Special Envoy Eliasson. We take this opportunity to assure him of Panama's fullest support in his discharge of this mandate.

On 31 July 2007, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1769 (2007) through which it authorized the deployment of UNAMID. This historic decision emphasizes the political determination of two organizations to share responsibilities in achieving a common objective. In addition to confirming our unswerving commitment to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations regarding cooperation with regional organizations in the pacific settlement of conflicts, it underpins Panama's stated position to deal with different conflicts with different measures, in keeping with the characteristics and particularities of the conflict. This innovative spirit could be employed in resolving other conflicts.

We emphasize that the deployment of the Hybrid Operation and political negotiations are parallel processes. The political process, as the lynchpin of peace, security and stability in Darfur, calls for an unswerving commitment to a cessation of hostilities that can only be achieved in a secure environment for dialogue, which should be obtained through the Hybrid Operation.

Since this operation was authorized, we have encountered numerous difficulties. However, we welcome the information provided by the Secretary-General regarding the imminent signature of the status-of-forces agreement and that the Sudanese Government has shown new flexibility in its position regarding the origin of contingents that make up the Hybrid Operation.

Still, many matters remain pending, particularly the generation of aviation and transport units. In this regard, we welcome the efforts of the Government of the United Kingdom in obtaining offers for these units.

We note that the most recent trip by the Special Envoys to the region has produced significant advances in the political process. The greater consistency in the positions of a number of rebel groups and signs of flexibility constitute progress. We share the concern of many delegations regarding the slow pace of the process. However, we do acknowledge that this conflict is the product of decades of discontent affected by the creation of borders that do not reflect the social reality on the ground and that we cannot erase with our desires to adhere to pre-established timelines. We repeat our urgent pleas to the countries able to influence the leaders of some of the rebel groups to step up their efforts to encourage them to join this process.

Moreover, Panama echoes the sentiments expressed by States regarding their serious concerns regarding the lack of protection by the Government of Sudan of the human rights of its citizens and its lack of respect for the authorities of the International Criminal Court.

Lastly, we cannot ignore the critical situation that exists in Chad and the potential impact of this situation on refugees from Darfur and on internally displaced persons. This crisis may compound tensions between the Sudan and Chad and therefore may have an impact on the political process in Darfur. Similarly, it undermines regional endeavours to settle the conflict in

Darfur where Chad's participation is fundamental. We therefore appeal to both countries to adhere to the commitments entered into under the various agreements with a view to normalizing their relations.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

I call on Mr. Jan Eliasson, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Darfur, to respond to comments or questions.

Mr. Eliasson: I thank the members of the Security Council for their support of the political process and the joint approach of the United Nations and African Union to find peace in Darfur.

Mr. Kumalo asked me a direct question about how the Member States could assist those efforts, so allow me to list a few steps that we would welcome very warmly. I must also say that these aspects were also covered by Mr. Guéhenno. But as some have stated here today, there is a clear interdependence between the peacekeeping and political tracks.

My first appeal to Council members is that they do everything they can to influence regional stability in that dangerous area. Chad/Sudan relations need to be normalized so that we can diminish the very negative consequences that could follow, in Darfur, from that relationship and the tragic events of last week.

Secondly, more than ever there is a need to urgently demand a cessation of hostilities by the parties. I have just received, this minute, reports from the field about attacks on villages by Sudanese army entities and militia groups. Those reports are not yet detailed or confirmed, but it seems that hundreds of people may have been killed in those attacks, and they continue at this moment. So that is a dramatic reminder, at this meeting, that there is a clear need to urgently demand of the parties an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Also, whatever members can do to influence the quick deployment of troops — and Jean-Marie Guéhenno will expand upon this — will be of direct significance for the work that Salim Salim and I are carrying out, since we must instil a sense of security in the people of Darfur. If they do not see increased security and improved conditions, they will lose their hope and their belief in the political process and in the peacekeeping operation.

More specifically in my realm of responsibility, we welcome the fact that we are now dealing with five movements instead of the much greater earlier number. That is a step forward. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) is also doing its part to help in that process. But we also need the encouragement of all Member States and for them to send messages, through the various channels that they are able to utilize, that the movements must choose the political track.

We are now seeing an enormously dangerous development, which is tragically evident today. We must step back from the escalation of hostilities; the situation is dangerous enough. I see growing frustration, anger and disillusionment in the camps. One can imagine a 13-year-old boy who came to the camps four years ago; he is now 17, he sees his father unemployed and his mother running the risk of being raped when she goes to gather firewood. There is also the fact that different villages are now taken over by people who do not own those villages. But if we have an escalation now, the entire humanitarian operation will be in danger. The escalation must be stopped, or we will be faced with another huge tragedy in Darfur and Sudan as a whole. The mass killings are behind us — and still must be addressed via other channels — but we have new problems that could erupt into huge tragedies.

Members should do everything they can to send that message to all concerned parties — the Government of Sudan, the movements — but also to the regional actors. Several speakers highlighted that; we cannot have peace in Darfur without the cooperation of the neighbouring countries in the region. We had some very productive meetings with Libya, Chad, Eritrea and Egypt. We had three very productive meetings, but now, as members understand, with the recent events in Chad, that regional cooperation is going to face difficulties. We need their cooperation. The borders there were drawn in 1895 in Berlin, and between Chad and Sudan they certainly do not reflect tribal and ethnic realities. We pay a price for that today, or rather the people of Darfur and of Chad pay a price for that today.

My last point is on an economic issue. It does not only concern humanitarian assistance, that is, the extremely great need to continue the humanitarian assistance. I would also state that Member States, particularly the donor community but also perhaps all of us, should think about the need to start planning now for recovery efforts. There is a long road between

humanitarian assistance and development programmes. We need to become more active in post-conflict recovery efforts.

I was at a village less than a month ago, in an area patrolled by a movement, and I strayed into the village after the talks with the movement leaders. It was a very depressing sight; it was even worse than the situation in the camps. The market had nothing but onions, as I recall, and the school had 12 or 14 books for about 300 children. The children had gray faces and women had to walk for two or three hours to get water, as the well was dry. If a woman was pregnant and was to give birth to a child, she would have to ride a mule for four to five days to a village called Qutum.

Those are the realities, and we need to understand that Darfur is a neglected part of Sudan. There is a great need for the economic dimensions to also be taken into account. That could help us in the negotiations, since we would then have a ray of hope to give to the people of Darfur, if we were coming from negotiations that would lead to a fair distribution of the wealth of Sudan — which is still there.

Those are my comments, and I would also like to thank the Council members on behalf of my friend and colleague, Salim Ahmed Salim, for the solid support they give us in the work we try to conduct under very difficult circumstances. We are grateful for their understanding of the complicated nature of our work.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Eliasson for his important comments. I now give the floor to Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Guéhenno: Allow me to thank the Council for the support it provides to a very challenging mission. Our partnership with the African Union is key, and I am very grateful for the very close relationship that we have with the African Union in moving forward together in that endeavour.

I was asked three specific questions. I will start with the last question, from the representative of the United States of America, regarding the helicopters and the Ethiopian offer. We are indeed very grateful to the Government of Ethiopia for making that offer and we welcome that pledge. I am not in a position today to give the exact timeline. We will quickly conduct a review of that offer to see whether it meets the requirements. But it is indeed a very welcome pledge.

The representative of the United Kingdom asked about the conclusion of the status-of-forces agreement and protecting the freedom of movement in that agreement. We have had very constructive discussions with the Government of the Sudan on the agreement, so I do hope that we will not find any obstacles in our path, on this critical issue of freedom of movement. I look forward to the conclusion of the agreement in the same spirit in which we have conducted the discussions thus far.

Let me now come to the other question raised by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom with respect to the events presently unfolding in Darfur. It was in the course of this briefing that we received what are still preliminary reports. They will need to be confirmed and verified, but it seems that an attack was launched this morning by a joint Sudanese Armed Forces-Arab militia convoy on two localities north of El Geneina — Abu Suruj and Sirba. That attack, apparently, was supported by helicopters and possibly fixed-wing aircraft. Moreover, just north of those two localities, the attack would have been pursued on Sileia, which is a bit to the north-east of Sirba, I am told, with two bombs dropped on that particular locality. A compound of Médecins sans Frontières was looted a week or so ago. There has been a lot of upheaval in those localities, but these are still very preliminary reports.

What I would want to say on this very disturbing new spike in violence in Darfur is that, unfortunately, for those who have been following the situation it does not come as a surprise. We have seen in recent weeks and days — actually, even yesterday — more reinforcement in El Geneina. Vehicles are coming from Nyala to reinforce Government forces. Also, we can recall the events in December. As this Council will recall, in December there were attacks conducted by the movements in those same areas where the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) is trying to consolidate its positions north of El Geneina, with bombings and attacks against the Sudanese armed forces by JEM in response.

What we are witnessing is actually a war, with offensive and counter-offensive fighting, which will put the peacekeeping operation in a very difficult situation, because we will be there in the midst of a shooting war between parties that want to consolidate their positions. Neither side can accept a defeat, and that is a very worrying trend, as Special Envoy

Eliasson said, if we want to gradually lower the level of violence.

We do hope that those attacks will not be pursued further into Jebel Mun, because the reality of that war is that civilians are the victims of such combat. Whether attacks are launched by movements or by the Government of the Sudan, the civilians are the main victims. Their houses are burned, their villages are destroyed, and peace becomes a more remote prospect as violence develops.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.